

synonyms. We must know the will of God to be saved (John 6:44-45), for the Gospel is “the power of God to salvation” (Romans 1:16). Thus, we escape “the corruption that is in the world through lust” by learning, believing, and obeying the Gospel (Galatians 3:26-27). This includes five simple steps into Christ: 1) hearing the Gospel, 2) believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, 3) repenting of our sins, 4) confessing our belief in Jesus Christ, and 5) being baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins. The result is that we are righteous (not guilty) and are truly holy by the forgiveness of our sins.

Then we must still develop righteousness and holiness by “giving all diligence” (“make every effort,” **ESV**) to add the seven qualities of character listed in 2 Peter 1:5-7. Thus, the second process in receiving this nature has seven steps.

Actually, eight are mentioned in 2 Peter 1:5-7, but one, faith, is assumed on the part of the Christian as already a part of his life, for “.... without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

But to our faith we must be add “virtue” (“moral excellence” **NASB**). Young Joseph demonstrated virtue when he refused to commit fornication with his master’s wife and so “sin against God,” even though his refusal caused him to be thrown into prison (Genesis 39:7-10). Virtue is the courage to do right regardless of the temptation to sin.

Further, we must have “knowledge” (knowing the facts of God’s Word). To avoid sin and practice righteousness, we must know the divine standard. Bible knowledge comes only through diligent study. We should desire Bible study “as newborn babes” desire milk (1 Peter 2:2). Just as a baby needs milk to survive, a Christian needs God’s Word to survive.

To knowledge we must add “self-control.” This is the quality Paul demanded in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. As the athlete in training disciplines himself to receive the proper diet, exercise, and rest and to have the proper attitude, the Christian must carefully discipline his thoughts, desires, words, and actions to keep them pleasing to God. One who fails to control himself will soon “become disqualified.”

We must add “perseverance” (endurance in difficulty). We must not give up, no matter how difficult the circumstances. Job exemplifies this quality (James 5:11), because he maintained his righteousness even though Satan pounded him with horrible tragedies (Job 1:20-22;

2:3,10). One must endure all difficulty and temptation, even to the end, not just offer a short-lived burst of clean living.

We must also have “godliness” (the attitude which seeks to please God, not ourselves). The boy Samuel, by Eli’s instruction and as God called him, replied, “Speak, for Your servant hears” (1 Samuel 3:10). This is godliness. It should be our attitude toward God and His word. It shouldn’t matter to us what we think or desire or what any man says. All we should desire to know is, What does the Bible say?

We must add “brotherly kindness.” This is the love that Christians cherish for each other as brothers. The practical results will be kindness and tenderness toward one another and a willingness to forgive our brother’s sins against us (Ephesians 4:32).

Finally, “love” (active good will) must be the most fundamental quality of our lives. We must show love for God by sincere and complete obedience to His every command (1 John 5:3). We must demonstrate love toward other people by seeking their good in all we do (1 John 3:17-18).

The one who has “escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” and has given “all diligence” to add these traits to his own character is a partaker of the divine nature. He is a fruit-bearing disciple, pleasing to his Master (2 Peter 1:8). But, the child of God who fails to add these good qualities to his life is careless, not looking to the eternal goal, and has forgotten the purpose of his calling (2 Peter 1:9).

*Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;
for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
(2 Peter 1:10-11).*

Questions for Review

I. True/False

1. ____ In one sense all people share the divine nature.
2. ____ We can be saved without becoming partakers of the divine nature.

I. Matching

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| 1. _____ divine nature | A. sin and its temptations |
| 2. _____ righteousness | B. endurance in difficulty |
| 3. _____ true holiness | C. evil desires |
| 4. _____ corruption | D. not guilty |
| 5. _____ world | E. active good will |
| 6. _____ lust | F. separated from sin and set apart to God's service |
| 7. _____ virtue | G. love that Christians cherish for each other as brothers |
| 8. _____ perseverance | H. moral excellence |
| 9. _____ godliness | I. being like God |
| 10. _____ brotherly kindness | J. attitude which seeks to please God, not ourselves |
| 11. _____ love | K. decay |

II. Place the seven qualities of character of the divine nature in the order they are found in 2 Peter 1:5-7.

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| 1. _____ | A. godliness |
| 2. _____ | B. self control |
| 3. _____ | C. love |
| 4. _____ | D. virtue |
| 5. _____ | E. brotherly kindness |
| 6. _____ | F. knowledge |
| 7. _____ | G. perseverance |

Bible Correspondence Course Lesson Sixteen Partakers of the Divine Nature

Different people have different natures. Some people, evil sinners, have the nature of the devil (John 8:44). Others are so wicked they have the nature of "brute beasts" (2 Peter 2:12). But to receive God's blessings in His Son, we must be "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4,10-11). How can we become sharers (partakers) of the divine nature?

The apostle Peter answers this question in 2 Peter 1:2-11. He begins by reminding us of the wonderful blessings that are ours if we do share the divine nature. First, we will now receive such blessings as "Grace," "Peace," and "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:2-3). "Exceedingly great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:4) await us in the future. Certainly, we should desire to be partakers of the divine nature.

The "divine nature" is simply God-likeness, being like God. In one sense all men, even the worst of sinners, are like God. "God created man in his own image" (Genesis 1:27). He is the Father of our spirits (Hebrews 12:9), which, like Him, are immortal (will not die), invisible, rational (capable of reason), and moral (capable of telling the difference between right and wrong). In this sense, humans in general possess the divine nature, regardless of race or sex.

But the "divine nature" of our study is conditional. It consists of "the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Ephesians 4:24, **NASB**). "Righteousness" means being innocent, not guilty. "Holiness of the truth" is being separated from sin and set apart to God's service. Our character becomes like the very moral nature of God, that we might dwell with Him throughout eternity.

How do we obtain this God-like character? First, we must escape "the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4).

Corruption means decay and is the consequence of "the world." The term "world" here refers to sin and its temptations (cf. 1 John 2:15-17). We are led into this corruption through lust (evil desires). Thus, we are to escape the consequence of sin, which is eternal death.

Two terms are used in 2 Peter 1:2-3 to show us how to escape. They are "knowledge" and "power." Here, these two words are